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**SALT-WORKS IN CHINA.**

**Primitive Methods Employed by the Workers.**

During a late winter in the north of our city I traversed the district containing the salt and gas wells for which Sz-chuan is noted, and when the inevitable question came: "Do you have much things over your foreign-side?" one could not but admire the implacable sarcasm, in genuine adulation of the achievements which the Chinese have made with, or in spite of their cumbersome tools. There is a whole region of the salt wells named "Talling" (the self-flowing well) = "faling" throughout the empire. In a valley some one hundred and twenty miles from the coast, the salt water, after a scattered unvalued town lying upon both banks of an clear, greenish stream sold to be "strongly impregnated with salt," and literally covered with salt. There is also some business activity in the place that, combined with the heavy smoke lying on all around, brings more vividly to mind the manufacturing districts of our own land, than the fact that the salt works in China. The most prominent objects in the city are the huge clumsily-constructed wooden derricks reared on the hill-sides, among the houses, and, in some places, on the roofs of the houses. The houses appear to be built to accommodate the derrick, rather than otherwise. Every derrick means a well. Every courtyard of the owners are allowed to impinge on the street, for obtaining and evaporating the salt. The well is a small circular opening in the ground, perhaps eight or ten inches in diameter. A large stone or bamboo cylinder, the axle of the well covers the top, and through the opening a bamboo cylinder, perhaps thirty feet in length, shod with iron at the lower end, is let down into the well. The axle of the cylinder is drawn up filled with water, which is then become up and emptied into an adjoining reservoir. The apparatus for lowering and raising this cylinder is of the crank and ratchet type. The crank is a thick, flat, hatched wheel about twenty feet from the well, is a huge wooden wheel around which is coiled the well-rope. The rope is fastened to the bamboo cylinder, and the axle of the wheel is at the top of the derrick. When all is ready the large wheel on which the rope is coiled, is set in motion, and the rope, which is so turns, just whirling round the axle, is let down to the bottom of the well. There is no more rope to pay out.

Now comes the task of raising the fat-fallen bamboo cylinder, and the bamboo, sometimes with buffaloes, is attached to the wheel and the thing set in motion. Very often a number of men and boys, in all conditions of dress, as they appear, are necessary to fold, or stretch out, of the wheel, and the procession starts. I counted between two and thirty boys on one wheel, but they had no other means of raising it. The heavy axle in the three thousand or perhaps five at the end of which dangled perhaps five gallons of dirty salt water. The process is slow and expensive. If the fall of the bamboo is so violent, the men and boys are afraid, the foreigners they could well be taught an easier method. That is but half the process.

When the reservoir is filled the water is let down in fast-boats or buckets on men's shoulders to the place where it is evaporated and the salt finally secured. There are two methods. One in which soft coal is used, and another in which natural gas is employed. The natural gas, which abounds in certain places. The gas is conveyed to the desired spot by means of bamboo pipes fitted together as well as the Chinese pipes, and is then bound round with braided straw. The story is a roughly-built shed having parallel rows of cast iron pans beneath which the gas is burning and the evaporation constantly going on day and night. For light during the night the stoves are naked gas lights of sufficient quantity all about the place. These are never extinguished at any place, and I judge a great waste of space because of the constant fire. Contrary to the whole place, however, is noted for its wealth, and one may see violent contentions between the rich well-fed nabobs and the poor, but actually very poor, and carry them, and their families, of starvelings who huddle together in their poor quarters less cared for than beasts that perish. Apart from the natural gas, the only thing attaching to this spot for its wealth is the fact that other in its character. Crowded together in a few square miles of ground are uncounted thousands of human souls—poor, ignorant, and in ignorance.

—W. M. Uppcraft, in Standard.

**Seemed Like Amos.**

Silas Hodges was a strong, hard-working farmer; his brother Amos was a confirmed invalid who, three or four times a year, had "spells" of expecting to die, but, nevertheless, always managed to live, contrary to the expectations of his friends. He was so thoughtful that he was in considerable danger.

But, while Amos was sick and expecting to die, he noticed that the neighbors were getting ready to build a new house. A messenger carried the news to his sister Elvira, a grim spinster, who lived in a distant part of the town.

"I've heard the message with some incredulity."

"Taint Silas yea mean; it's Amos," she said in reply.

"I mean that Amos is all right. It's Silas that's dead."

"Wal, praps it's so," was the reluctant rejoinder, "but I wouldn't ha' believed it o' Silas; 's seems a good deal more like Amos."—YOUTH'S COMPANION.

**The Most Desirable Vocation.**

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